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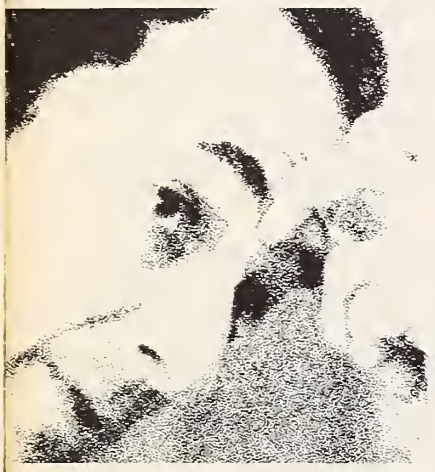
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Food & Nutrition

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An Interview with Lew Straus

The new administrator of the Food and Nutrition Service talks about the future of the Food Stamp Program and problems facing administrators of Child Nutrition Programs. **Page 2**

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WIC and Nutrition Education

State and local staffs work together to provide nutrition education to participants of the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children. Articles illustrate some of the challenges involved, and highlight activities now underway in several areas. **Page 5**

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Lunches Kids Like

How can you get kids to like school lunches? Try serving them lunches they like! Three articles report ways schools are involving students in their efforts to build better lunch programs. Students taste-test foods, help with menu planning, and offer suggestions on ways to improve school lunchrooms. **Page 9**

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A New Jersey district has "taste-test" days

An Indiana school starts a student committee

An Interview with Lew Straus

The new administrator of FNS is fairly young, only 43. He has a look of almost grim-faced seriousness which can take a quick 180-degree turn and break into an easy, even effervescent grin. His voice is deep and, like most deep voices, it's quiet, sometimes almost hard to hear. He talks slowly, lingering over the words. But just like his face, his voice can jump with sudden animation, and words come tumbling out one over another. Then, just as abruptly, they stop, as if a spigot somewhere is shut off.

Lewis B. Straus came to Washington with the new administration. Like many of the new people in D.C., Lew Straus comes to the bureaucracy from the shadow government of advocacy groups.

Since 1972, Mr. Straus has been in charge of the National Child Nutrition Project, a nonprofit organization seeking to improve and expand the Federal food programs administered by FNS.

Under his direction, the National Child Nutrition Project initiated effective food stamp outreach campaigns in several States including Indiana, Oklahoma, Illinois, and Minnesota.

In addition, Mr. Straus trained community-based food program advocates and directed the preparation of information materials to increase participation in the Food Stamp Program.

Our new administrator's experience encompasses food programs for children as well as adults. In 1969, he became assistant director of planning for the New Jersey Department of Education where he supervised the review of child nutrition programs. A year later, his interest in these programs led him to become head of a special State project to increase the participation of low-income children in the school lunch program.

In 1971, he was appointed director of food programs for the New Jersey Department of Education. As director, he wrote New Jersey's mandatory school lunch act.

In an interview early this summer, Mr. Straus talked about the future of the Food Stamp Program and new directions with outreach, and also shared some thoughts on problems facing administrators of the child nutrition programs.

Q What do you see as the future of the Food Stamp Program?

A No one really knows the answer to that question. Surely, welfare reform is coming. It may well include the cash out of a number of programs and food stamps may be one of them. But I think that may well be 2, 3, 4 years or more in the future.

Meanwhile, it seems to me that the program ought to do a better job of reaching people who before now haven't been on the program, even though they are eligible. That's the first thing.

The second thing is that the program ought to be streamlined administratively. We need to end the excessively complicated application procedure which is almost calculated to produce errors. We as program managers ought to spend our time in extending the benefits of the program to eligible people rather than getting bogged down in the extraordinarily complicated system of gatekeeping.

Q You seem especially committed to aggressive outreach for food stamps. How can we make our outreach efforts effective?

A I define outreach as getting news of the program dispersed widely so all people who are eligible know about the program and how to apply. I also think a broader definition of outreach must include an awareness on our part that information alone will not do it.

We need people in allied social service agencies and volunteers who can do pre-screening. We need to have our basic information backed up with a process that will move a person from the awareness that there is a Food Stamp Program to the knowledge that they may be eligible and should apply to take part.

As far as outreach itself, there are many techniques which work. Some that have proven effective include:

- A well-publicized food stamp hotline so people can find out if they're eligible for the program;
- Newspaper announcements concerning the program and questions and answers addressing popular misconceptions;
- Announcements on television and radio;
- Information mailed along with welfare and unemployment checks;
- Pre-screeners and certifiers at unemployment offices;
- Circuit riding certification officers who go out to where people live;
- Mass pre-screening.

There are many ways of getting news about food stamps to people and making the process easier and more humane.

So, information is important, so is pre-screening, so is addressing problems that have made it difficult for people to get into the program—problems like the inaccessibility of food stamp offices, return visits, etc. Outreach is just one step. The next step is to remedy conditions which work against participation.

Q Given that we have a more aggressive stance towards outreach, will responsibility for outreach focus on the States or the Federal Government? And, if the responsibility goes to the States, do we plan to give them more money?

A I think the Federal role is to require a strong, functioning outreach program. But that program, at the local level, can only be carried out by the States.

The States will continue to get 50 percent of all their administrative costs reimbursed by the Federal government, and for each additional dollar they spend, we will reimburse another dollar. In effect, it's a one-to-one share.

States also have the ability to enlist the participation of nonprofit agencies

which often have access to Community Food and Nutrition Program monies through the Community Services Administration. These can be put up as the State's share, which means, in effect, there are many potential dollars out there that could be doubled for outreach without additional expense for the States.

Q Say we do a very good job with outreach and get 60, or 70, or even 80 percent of eligible people taking part. Will our budgets be able to support the increases in participation?

A If the question is whether or not a more aggressive outreach program will bring more people on, the answer is yes. I feel it ought to be our job to extend the benefits of the program to as many people who are eligible, knowing full well that not all will participate under any circumstances. I think that this may indeed have budgetary implications. How large is difficult to predict at this point. But we're not going to reduce our efforts. In fact, we're going to strengthen our efforts in reaching eligible people, fully aware that it in fact may cost more.

Q Part of doing a good outreach job is addressing the program's poor public image. If we try to change the public's perception of the Food Stamp Program, will we somehow be subtly undermining President Carter's welfare reform?

A We can change the public's perception by making the program work. My job is to make the program work. There is no way that we will alienate the Administration by making the program work.

As far as the welfare stigma—I'm aware that there is a welfare stigma for people who get food stamps, but it's ridiculous. This is a program open to people who are eligible, and they need make no apology for wanting to participate. It is here for them, they are eligible. Nobody feels guilty about using Federal services in other ways.

There is no reason they should feel guilty about using food stamps. It is, in fact, far more desirable that people meet their nutritional needs with food stamps than that they drive their cars over Federally financed roads.

We, as a country, do not like poor people. It's been part of our social history to feel that if a person is poor, it's because he or she somehow deserves to be poor. We have to combat that attitude. There are many good, honest, hardworking poor people in this country. But there are some people who will never be convinced. They will continue to attach the welfare stigma to anyone receiving food stamps regardless of how we present the program. They'll see it as welfare until they are eligible or their parents are eligible—not before.



Q You've had a lot of experience at the State level with child nutrition programs. From your experience there, what do you see to be the main problem facing State and local people administering child nutrition programs?

A One great problem is the number of separate programs they are dealing with at the State level—school lunch, breakfast, summer food, child care. We need to be able to standardize methods of administration, accounting and reporting. This will relieve some of the administrative burden for the States and also improve accountability.

Q You've mentioned several times your interest in expanding the school breakfast program. Would you

comment on that?

A I feel we have an obligation, at a minimum, to reach schools with substantial numbers of children at risk because of low income. We're going to push expansion of breakfast by strengthening requirements in State plans of operation. We will insist that school districts pick target schools and develop plans for reaching these schools and making breakfast available to needy children.

Q The school lunch program has set a very high standard for itself as far as providing children with nutritious food. Do you think we are being overly ambitious?

A Well, of course some food is being wasted in the school lunch program, just as it is in any insti-

tutional food service and, in fact, in many homes. But there are many excellent programs being run where waste is relatively small. What we have to do is find ways of preparing wholesome food which also meets students' taste preferences, and that's not very difficult.

Q But is it really possible for us to do what some parents say they can't do—make the kids eat their vegetables?

A We must do what we can through education and through preparing palatable vegetables and fruits to encourage good eating habits. We can't force people to eat, and we wouldn't want to. But what we do want to do is see to it that the food reaches the children in tasty, attractive condition. And then they will eat—they will eat. Wouldn't you?

Q Do you think the proposed welfare reform will leave child nutrition programs intact under the Department of Agriculture or might they be moved to the Department of Health, Education and Welfare or a newly created Department of Education?

A All signs are that the programs will remain here. They work best here, and we have the capacity to administer them well. And, we're going to manage them better than they've ever been managed before. It would be a mistake for these programs to be transferred to another agency. The working relationships which have been built up over the years allow these programs to be better managed here than anywhere else. □



WIC and Nutrition Education

As one of the few Federal programs to simultaneously provide nutritious foods and nutrition education, the WIC program presents a special challenge to the people who administer it.

Officially known as the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children, WIC provides food to pregnant and nursing mothers, infants, and children up to their fifth birthday. Participants must qualify on the basis of income and be determined to be "at nutritional risk."

Nutrition education became part of the WIC program with Public Law 94-105, the child nutrition legislation of October 1975, which authorized WIC until September 30, 1978. The law called for States to prepare annual nutrition education plans describing the manner in which they will provide nutrition education to the WIC target audience.

Submitted each year to FNS for review, the plans outline, for example: what the States' objectives will be; what the content will include; what teaching methods and materials will be used; what kinds of evaluation efforts will be undertaken. These plans serve as working tools for the States, and they enable FNS to make sure nutrition education efforts are consistent with national goals.

The following articles tell how several States are working with local staffs to carry out nutrition education programs. Some of the efforts described are the result of projects or objectives State staffs had outlined in their nutrition education plans. Others are ideas developed in response to particular needs or problems that State or local people had not originally anticipated.

The articles illustrate some of the challenges State and local WIC administrators face: developing staff resources; determining the best ways to teach WIC recipients about the nutritional value of WIC foods and how to use them to supplement their regular diets; gearing individual programs to certain groups within the

WIC target audience, teenage mothers for instance; identifying and obtaining appropriate educational materials. These are just a few.

Connecticut staffs share ideas

"You think you are alone and then you find that other people have the same problems," said Ilene Lapidés as she pushed the elevator button in a hallway outside the conference room in Hartford's Burgdorf Clinic.

Ms. Lapidés is one of 15 WIC project nutritionists who get together for monthly in-service training meetings. On the first Friday afternoon of every month, they meet to talk about mutual concerns ranging from how to write a budget to the latest films suitable for clinic showing.

The Connecticut in-service program was set up by Nancy Goldberg, WIC nutrition consultant in the State department of health. Ms. Goldberg decided to start the meetings when she recognized that she was being asked the same questions at all the WIC sites.

Nutritionists select topics

In setting up the program, Ms. Goldberg began by sending a list of possible topics to all the WIC nutritionists, asking them to list their priorities and to eliminate and add subjects according to their importance. She then developed a schedule, alternating presentations by resource guest speakers from outside with presentations by the nutritionists themselves.

"Some of the nutritionists have just come through master's programs and want to brush up on a special area such as iron needs," Ms. Goldberg explains.

The first presentation by a WIC nutritionist, Jean Bogdanski of Norwich, covered nutrition and the pregnant adolescent. All the nutritionists are keenly aware that the teenage mother's physical and psychological needs differ from those of an adult woman, and they are eager to learn techniques to help them.

A recent guest visitor was Marie Lubeley, director of the Nutrition and Technical Services Staff of the FNS New England Regional Office. She led a discussion on nutrition education plans for local projects. The nutritionists brought with them rough drafts of their local plans. Because they had done some work on the plans, the nutritionists were ready with questions and were receptive to Ms. Lubeley's leads on content and organization.

Individual projects discussed

Often during the monthly meetings, the nutritionists talk about the individual strengths and weaknesses of their projects. In Hartford, for example, Sharon Tarantino is nutritionist for a WIC project with a caseload of 6,200. Although Ms. Tarantino believes individual counseling is the best way to reach mothers, it is physically impossible for her to use this approach. So, she often works through other nutritionists who may be in close contact with WIC recipients, especially those in the Connecticut Infant and Maternal Care program.

In addition, she has trained the clerical workers in her office to ask for a 24-hour diet recall at the time of recertification and to probe for nutritional needs or problems.

Because she must work with and through others, Ms. Tarantino is interested in educational materials which reinforce nutrition concepts. The Hartford WIC project has developed a flip chart for use during interviews. The project staff is now testing the chart with clients. At a recent meeting on the development of printed materials, the nutritionist shared with others the concept of pre-testing—which she learned while working for her master's degree in community nutrition at the University of Connecticut. Before having materials printed in volume, the Hartford staff tests them with clients for comprehension.

Special attention to teenagers

Because of the greater nutritional needs of pregnant teenage girls, Ms. Tarantino works with these girls on a group basis. She gives classes in prenatal and infant nutrition at a Hartford Public School for girls who are pregnant. The enrollment is 80, and she has struggled to find ways to arrange for small group classes, working toward a discussion rather than a lecture format.

In New Haven, nutritionist Ivana Lillios is also concerned about teenage pregnancies. Her caseload of 1,000 at Hill Health Center is smaller than Sharon Tarantino's, and her operation is fully integrated into a facility which is delivering preventive health care. The medical staff automatically refers clients for nutritional counseling.

"It is very important to recognize the extra strain of pregnancy during the time when a girl is still actually growing," Ms. Lillios says.

Ms. Lillios is also concerned with printed materials for patients. Hill Health Center recently developed a series of pamphlets—*Feeding your Newborn (infancy to 3 months)*, *Feeding your Baby (4 to 6 months)*, *Feeding your Baby (7 months to a year)*. The series illustrates the shared wisdom that materials on child growth for clients should be broken down into

small units. Because they are different bright colors, these pamphlets are easy for clients to differentiate, and the expense is not great if one is lost. Each time one is given to a mother at the clinic, it acts as a reinforcement to the verbal nutrition counseling.

Working on common problems

All WIC nutritionists are searching for better ways to reach the teenage girl who is pregnant, all seek to give their patients attractive, readable information which reminds them of important nutrition facts, and all must write nutrition education plans. At the in-service training sessions, they find help in working out these and other common problems.

While in-service training sessions focus primarily on one topic, they serve several other functions. For example, nutritionists get to share with their colleagues reports from the latest professional meeting of groups such as the American Dietetic Association. And, Nancy Goldberg can update them on administrative matters and remind them about equipment and resources available to help them do their jobs. Cameras, projectors, and similar items are available from the State office on request. As the State Consultant says, "How can you justify it in your own budget, if you don't use what is available now?"

The meetings are not without their frustrations. For one, there is so little time. "In one afternoon, how can you do more than skim the surface of a subject as complex as teenage pregnancy?" asks Ms. Goldberg.

"Also, these nutritionists are accustomed to attending professional meetings where people present papers based on several years of research. Because we can't concentrate on just one thing, we tend toward generalities," she adds.

"However, the discussions do stimulate thought, and often someone comes up with a gem that gives us all insight into a common problem."

Meetings held at different sites

The meetings are held at different WIC sites each month. The objective is twofold. First, to equalize the driving time. "It will never come out exactly even—but the same people aren't doing all the traveling, all the time," Ms. Goldberg says.

Even more important, rotating the sites gives the nutritionists opportunities to see and understand the working environments of others. "After looking at someone else's problems, your own don't seem as bad," the nutritionist points out.

Subject matter for in-service training meetings seems inexhaustible. Topics scheduled in the near future are: nutritional assessment—tools, problems, implications; use of questionnaires to assess the knowledge of nutrition aides; crisis events in motivation for preventive health care. Ms. Goldberg keeps a file of clippings which may be a source of other meeting topics or of ideas for approaches to nutrition education. Recently she clipped a story in the *Hartford Courant* on teachers getting a lesson in dramatic lecturing.

Details are important

Setting up in-service training takes a great deal more time than one might think, according to the State consultant. "Even writing up the minutes after the meetings takes considerable time," she notes. These minutes, plus handouts from resource people, have become the basis of an orientation packet she gives to new WIC nutritionists. As WIC has expanded, from 9 local projects to 15 since in-service training began, there has usually been a new nutritionist at each meeting.

Ms. Goldberg is careful about other details, such as driving directions and parking instructions for the meetings. These courtesies also take time but they make things run smoothly and provide for maximum concentration during the one afternoon a month. The result is a WIC nutrition component with a high esprit de corps. It's a positive environment that ultimately benefits the WIC client.

by Catherine Tim Jensen

Western State coordinators get special training

Earlier in the year, the FNS Western Regional Office hosted a 3-day conference for the WIC coordinators from the 8 States the region serves. One entire day of that conference was devoted to nutrition education.

Coordinated by Amanda Torrillo, a member of the regional Nutrition and Technical Services Staff, the nutrition education session focused on several areas of concern to State administrators. Speakers from FNS, other government agencies, and private industry led discussions on such areas as: educational planning—theory and practice; program planning for nutrition education in WIC; developing nutrition education resources; training paraprofessionals; and innovative training approaches.

The State coordinators found the session on educational planning to be the most helpful to them, reports Ms. Torrillo, who asked participants to evaluate all the sessions at the end of the conference.

The leader of the discussion on educational planning was an educational consultant, who told the group that the key to successful planning is setting objectives and goals based on the careful identification of needs.

In the WIC program, State coordinators have to be concerned with objectives set at two levels, according to Ms. Torrillo. They must be concerned with setting objectives for the State staff, and they must also be concerned with the objectives set by the local staffs.

How do State and local objectives differ? Ms. Torrillo explains: "State objectives emphasize what the State staffs will do to provide assistance to local staffs. For example, a State objective might be: To train local WIC nutritionists in the special nutritional needs of pregnant and lactating women, infants and children.

"Local objectives, on the other hand, are stated in behavioral terms and emphasize what the recipient will do. For example, a local objective

might be: After participating in a nutrition education session dealing with iron-rich foods, at least 90 percent of the parents and guardians of children with unacceptable hemoglobin levels will be able to identify foods which are good sources of iron.

"Setting objectives is an essential part of the overall program planning process," she adds. "Evaluating and documenting results is another essential part."

In many areas, State and local staffs have opportunities to work with paraprofessionals, and the WIC coordinators found the session on training paraprofessionals to be very useful. An Extension specialist from the University of California at Berkeley talked about the advantage of working with paraprofessionals—namely,



An Alaska clinic provides a group lesson.

paraprofessionals know the community and can often relate to people from the community better than professionals can. In training paraprofessionals to work with a particular program, the Extension specialist stressed, it's important to do two things: first, to assess where the paraprofessionals "are" in terms of knowledge, and second, to determine what they need to be taught in order to be effective.

Addressing the problem of how an organization can provide training to its own staff, an industry representative described an innovative approach his company is using. The company works in the area of food research and had developed a self-study kit, which employees use at home. The employees complete a quiz at the end of the course.

State WIC coordinators attending the San Francisco conference had already developed some of their own innovative approaches to problems of training, staffing and planning. In the following summary, Ms. Torrillo describes some of the activities the State coordinators reported:

Alaska reaches remote clinics

Due to tremendous problems in geography, personnel, and resources, making nutrition education available to recipients in the northernmost WIC clinics located in Point Barrow, Wainwright, and Nuiqsut has been a major hurdle to overcome. The problem has been recently resolved through the hiring of an itinerant home economics teacher/dietitian. She will counsel WIC recipients and provide other forms of nutrition education as she travels by bush plane from village to village.

Arizona publishes a newsletter

To communicate regularly with its many local agencies, Arizona has developed a bi-monthly newsletter. *Education: Getting, Giving, Sharing* provides information on effective

methods and materials for delivering nutrition education, methods for implementing local educational plans, and results of evaluation. Local agencies contribute information regularly to the newsletter.

California has statewide effort

California is undertaking an all-out training effort to make sure its local project nutritionists are adequately prepared to provide nutrition education to WIC recipients. The State-wide effort focuses on educational program planning for local agencies, success-oriented counseling techniques, and nutritional assessment techniques. The State is using cooperating agencies such as the Dairy Council and Cooperative Extension to assist in presenting the training programs.

Hawaii enlists help of students

Even in paradise, problems of lack of personnel exist. But Hawaii's State coordinators have found one answer to staffing shortages in a cooperative arrangement with the School of Public Health at the University of Hawaii. University public health students get special training in the WIC program, which enables them to assist with certification and recertification of recipients, diet counseling, and general nutrition education.

Students are even taking families shopping as part of the WIC nutrition education effort. The students are supervised by the University School of Public Health and by the State WIC coordinator.

Oregon project has workshops

Local projects in Oregon are developing some interesting ways to provide nutrition education to WIC recipients. For example, special monthly workshops are part of nutri-

tion education efforts in Crook County. The workshops cover topics WIC recipients have expressed interest in, and invitations go out to each WIC family. WIC recipients volunteer to assist with making arrangements for the workshops, which are held at a local church.

The workshops are offered at two different times during the day for the convenience of the recipients. A home economics teacher at the local high school provides four or five students to assist with child care during the workshops. The added incentive? WIC food coupons are issued at the monthly meetings.

Idaho trains WIC clerks

Although it has a small program, Idaho has found that WIC projects which start with a strong nutrition education component are very successful in their endeavors. Clients in these clinics feel "disappointed" when they cannot see the nutritionist. So, in order to combat the problems of limited staff, Idaho is training WIC clerks to provide basic nutrition education to WIC recipients.

Washington works with area schools

The Washington State agency sees training as a high priority, and both professionals and paraprofessionals are taking part in training efforts at the university and community college levels. The State WIC staff arranged for a local community college to offer a basic course in nutrition for paraprofessionals. Participants received regular college credit for the course. Motivation was extremely high for participants to take additional nutrition courses which would lead to a degree.

As a followup to this course, the State agency gave training in program planning, assessing needs, identifying resources, and setting objectives. The State staff reports a real improvement in the quality of local agency nutrition education plans. □

Lunches Kids Like

How can you get kids to like school lunches? Try serving them lunches they like!

That's the unanimous advice of school lunch managers and school principals featured in the following three articles. These people have taken the time to find out what their customers really want—they've invited the students to taste-test foods, gotten them involved in menu planning, and asked for their suggestions on ways to improve the cafeteria.

Working with students can be a challenge that requires time, patience, and commitment. But it can pay off—satisfied customers complain less and eat more.

As the articles show, schools have found a variety of ways to involve students in their lunch programs. The first article tells how four Virginia schools took part in a national recipe-testing project last year and asked students to evaluate a series of specially prepared menu items. The second describes the district wide taste-tests conducted regularly in a New Jersey community. And the third shows how a student committee helps with taste-testing and lunch planning in an Indiana school.

Virginia schools take part in a nationwide project

"It's called Irish something . . . um, Irish cabbage, I think," said Tod Snead, a handsome young man of 10, gesturing toward his plate. He took another bite and nodded approvingly.

"I thought it was Scotch cabbage," protested Mike Adams from across the lunch table. Mike's eyes fixed on his untouched serving of the cabbage of disputed origin. Yep, it was still there. Making a face, Mike reluctantly prodded it with his fork.

Actually, "it" was Spanish cabbage, a prospective menu item being evaluated by fourth, fifth, and sixth graders at Rosenwald Elementary School in Waynesboro, Virginia. And the children were participants in a nationwide recipe-testing project, sponsored cooperatively by FNS and the Agricultural Research Service.

The aim of the project is to find out how well children taking part in the National School Lunch Program like the recipes created specifically for the program by the staff at the ARS Beltsville Laboratory. It's at Beltsville that ARS food technologists develop standardized quantity recipes that are included in the USDA Recipe Card File, a reference tool used by school lunch managers from coast to coast.

Many tests conducted

Working under a contract with FNS, the Beltsville staff tests and retests recipes like Spanish cabbage, weighing carefully several factors: Is the food nutritious and in keeping with FNS meal requirements? Are the ingredients obtainable at a moderate, or, better still, economical price? Can the food be easily prepared by school food service personnel using only the equipment normally found in an average onsite kitchen? And, most importantly, will the children find the menu item appealing enough to eat?

It's the answer to that last question that concerns project coordinators, Jackie Davis and Millie Cazier of the FNS Nutrition and Technical Services Staff, and Olive Batcher of ARS.

"Testing by a professional taste-testing panel has always been a part of developing our recipes," explains Jackie Davis. "Each time a recipe is prepared, it is evaluated by this panel

for appearance, aroma, texture, flavor, and overall quality.

"But the taste-testers are always adults. That's why we set up the recipe testing project—to get input from the children," she says.

Even when the adults decide in favor of a recipe, there's no guarantee that children will like it—and vice versa. Says Millie Cazier, "I can remember testing a particular recipe and thinking to myself, 'They are NEVER going to like THAT!' Then I'd see it become popular!

"There's just no way to predict kids' tastes," she adds.

With the recipe-testing project, there's no longer any need to predict or second-guess. FNS and ARS can now test "new" and "old" recipes—recipes which they are considering



A member of the Rosenwald staff prepares Spanish cabbage, carefully following directions.

adding to the card file as well as recipes already included in the file. And they can get "input" from children throughout the country, enabling them to compare regional differences in tastes.

Initially a pilot project

The project began on a pilot basis in 1973, with two schools testing three recipes. In 1974 and 1975, the project went nationwide, with 2 to 4 schools in each FNS region testing 8 and 12 recipes. By the fall of 1975, when the coordinators set up the recipe testing as an ongoing 5-year project, they had already tested 20 recipes in 36 schools.

During the first year of the 5-year project, the 1975-1976 school year,

the agencies tested 16 recipes in 20 schools. Last year, with the opening of a new FNS regional office, they expanded the number of schools to 24. And this year, with the opening of yet another regional office, 28 schools will be taking part in the project.

"Every year different schools participate," explains Jackie Davis. "Four schools in each region test four recipes apiece—it works out so that the 16 recipes are tested in all the regions."

Waynesboro schools take part

The Waynesboro schools represented the Mid-Atlantic Region last year. School food service supervisor Voncile Hoover had volunteered the assistance of four of the district's

elementary schools, much to the delight of the students. "The children were thrilled over the chance to take part in a research project," she says, "and they were excited to be representing not only the State of Virginia, but the other Mid-Atlantic States as well."

The school food service staffs were thrilled, too, Ms. Hoover adds.

Complying with the rigid test procedures takes a lot of extra effort on the part of a food service team. They must carefully adhere to preparation instructions, and that's no small job. USDA and State representatives provide encouragement and assistance, but the food service staff actually does the work.

"We're a little bit nervous," confided Ruby Harris, Rosenwald's school food service manager, as she supervised the preparation of the Spanish cabbage. The recipe calls for shredded cabbage to be served in a tangy tomato sauce, flavored with onion and bacon.

But Jackie Davis and Millie Cazier say the staff did fine, and Ms. Harris was all smiles as the perfectly prepared dish was placed on the serving line.

And what was the students' verdict? Spanish cabbage—yes or no?

"Tastes like chow mein," judged food critic Tod Snead, polishing it off. Tod's friend Mike smirked, "He'll eat anything."

"I never had anything like it before," said Steve Fields. Then thinking he might be misunderstood, he quickly added, "But I still like it."

Down at the end of the table, some of Steve's classmates agreed at first, then decided they didn't like it so much after all.

Children mark score cards

The official responses were gathered after lunch, when all the children who tasted the cabbage—over 100 in all—marked their score



After lunch, students mark their score cards.

cards. Did they like it? How often would they eat it if served? Had they ever eaten this food before, and if so, had they liked it?

After the students rated the menu item, the results went to FNS and ARS for study. There the students' responses are being computerized with those of all the other children taking part.

In order for the acceptability study to be accurate, it's important that the taste-testers reply honestly. Voncile Hoover is confident that the score-cards from Rosenwald Elementary accurately reflect the students' opinions of Spanish cabbage.

"If you explain to the children what you are trying to do, they'll cooperate, and you'll get honest answers," the food service supervisor says. "But if you just put a new item on the serving line without telling them why it's there, they'll be suspicious, and test results will reflect that."

Other recipes evaluated

During the year, the Rosenwald staff prepared three test recipes in addition to Spanish cabbage—hamburgers with 30% textured vegetable protein, baked custard, and tuna shortcake. The twelve other recipes tested in other schools last year were: meat loaf, toasted cheese sandwiches, savory peas, peanut pie, macaroni and cheese, baked hash, sweet-sour bean salad, fruit chews, hamburgers with 10% textured vegetable protein, tuna-macaroni salad, deviled carrots, and peach coffee cake.

After analyzing the kids' responses to the recipes, the USDA staff will decide whether to include the recipe in the Recipe Card File, revise the recipe and test it again for student acceptability, or eliminate the recipe altogether.

"Getting the kids involved and let-

ting them decide what they want and like to eat is a great idea, and one that's overdue," says Ms. Cazier. "You have to start with a good recipe—a recipe that kids like—if you expect to have a successful lunch program."

As for Spanish cabbage, some of the kids at Waynesboro hope the school will offer it again soon.

by Carol M. D'Arezzo

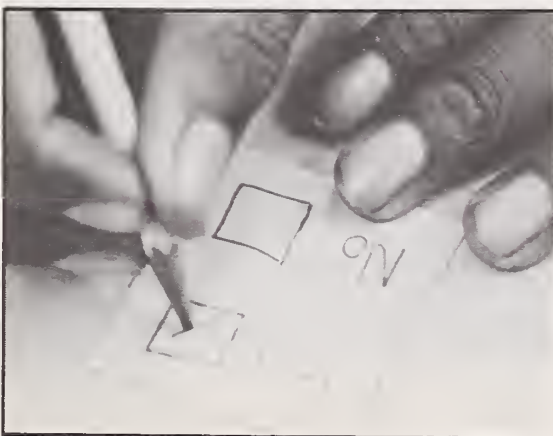
A New Jersey district has "taste-test" days

Charlotte Lynn, supervisor of food services for the city of New Brunswick, New Jersey, claims she would be lost without her taste-testing panel.

She came up with the idea of starting a student taste-testing panel in 1971, motivated by concern for the amount of food that was ending up in the garbage.

"I grew up during the Depression, and waste—especially food waste—is an anathema to me," Ms. Lynn says. "I realized that the only way to solve the problem was to go to the source—the students themselves."

"When I initiated taste-testing with the students here at Redshaw, I needed the support and total commitment of my people out front in the preparation and serving lines," adds Ms. Lynn. Today, with the taste-testing project expanded to include all 14 schools, Ms. Lynn relies on the support and commitment of all 100 district food service employees.



New Brunswick students pick up "test plates" and ballots. Chili dogs are the day's special feature.

"On days that we are to test one of my menu ideas in the schools, the principals announce over the public address system that a new entree will be tested," Mrs. Lynn explains. "Then during each lunch period, the first 30 students interested in the new entree get the chance to try it, and tell us what they think."

"Usually," she continues, "the special test plates are gone as soon as 30 students go through the line!"

Students receiving the special plates also get ballots to be marked "yes" or "no," depending on whether or not they liked the new entree. "I have a lot of faith in their taste judgments," Ms. Lynn says. "And, the kids have the final say on a yes or no basis. It's as simple as that."

After the final lunch period, the school staffs tally the votes, and the lunch managers call in the results to Ms. Lynn. The food service supervisor and her staff then count the votes from all the schools, and make the decision—based solely on the results—whether or not to include the test entree in future menu planning.

Test items successful

The school staffs usually prepare the test items themselves. One day last spring, they tested a recipe for "chili dogs," a mixture of chopped meat in tomato sauce with chopped onions and spices, served atop a hot dog on a bun. An old idea for New York street vendors, but a new item for the students and food service workers, the chili dogs received unanimous approval from the taste panel students and the workers who prepared them.

Ms. Lynn occasionally contracts specialty food concerns to prepare certain ethnic items, and students get to taste-test these items as well.

Recently, for example, a specialty food concern in Brooklyn prepared empinadas—Mexican meat pies—using USDA-donated beef and juices as the main ingredients. The empinadas were delivered frozen to the schools, which heated them on the day they were to be tested. The empinadas received "instant approval" from the student taste panel, and they are now a regular feature.

What happens if an item fails the taste test? Ms. Lynn never tries to rework it. "The students are just too smart and sophisticated when it comes to matters of taste," she says.

Eye appeal also important

"We cannot continue to advise children to eat something simply

because the food is good for them," Ms. Lynn says. "Aside from being nutritious, food must look good because all of us—regardless of age—'eat with our eyes.' After you have 'sold' your item through eye appeal, taste is the next and probably most important feature."

"So far," she concludes, "the students' sense of what tastes good has been an excellent barometer for me in gauging which foods to serve."

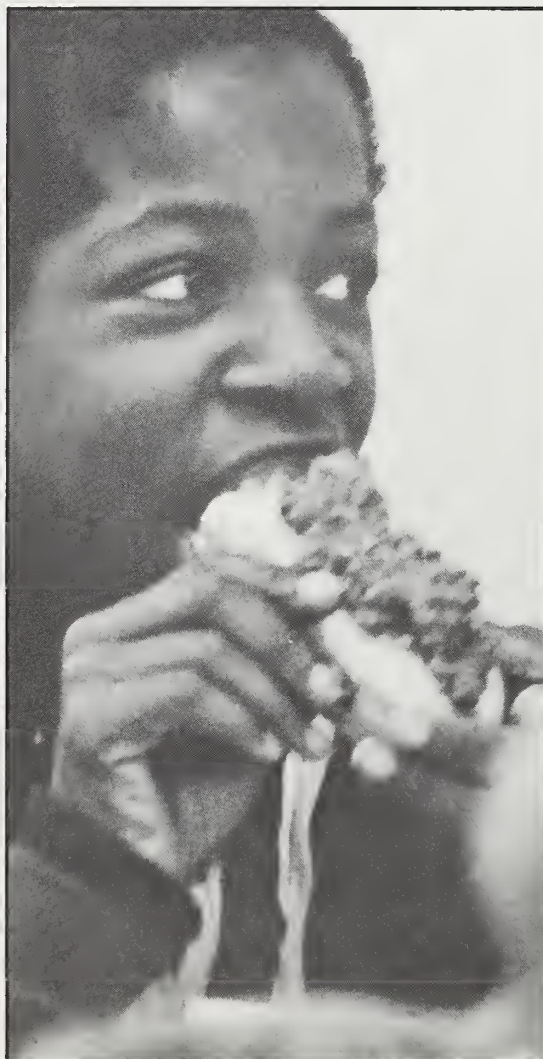
by Herb Strum

An Indiana school starts a student committee

"Jeff excels in many areas," reads the gold-lettered motto over the Jefferson High School Auditorium. "I like to point out that to visitors," says food service director Thelma Muston. "It's really true."

One place "Jeff" excels is in its food service. Thanks largely to Ms. Muston's efforts to involve students in taste-testing, planning, and evaluating meals, Jefferson High is known for its innovative lunch program. The school has: found a way to provide tote bags for hurried students; installed a milkshake machine; trimmed food waste; hiked participation; and started the first salad bar in Indiana.

Thelma Muston came to school food service in 1971 after a long career in the restaurant and catering business. In fact, she and her husband had just sold their business and were thinking of a Florida retirement when Ms. Muston learned that the Lafayette School Corporation needed a food service manager for its 16 schools.



When Ms. Muston began her new career, she did not know school lunch but she did know food service. And she knew that students want to eat tasty food in pleasant surroundings, just like other customers. She was convinced that Lafayette could provide lunches that would appeal to the district's 10,000 students.

Here Ms. Muston shares some of her experiences in working with students. She tells how she first involved students in her operation and describes how, together, they got some new things going at Jeff.

"SACY" was a first step

"I used to hear grumbling about the food or service in the lunch lines. Our biggest complaint was about the hamburgers. Students called them 'horseburgers' or 'shoeleather.' And sometimes, students asked for foods I couldn't afford to serve," Ms. Muston says. "The student council came to see me, too. Not often, but once is certainly enough.

"I had read in the journal of the American School Food Service Association that SACY—Student Advisory Council for Youth—was a national organization. At one of our State food service meetings, I asked about starting a local chapter and volunteered to head it. Later, I asked the Jefferson High student council to give me a student to start work with and Rebecca Demerly, a Jeff senior, came forward. Together we printed announcements and made requests over the school's public address system, asking for volunteers.

Students eager to work

"That first year, we had 19 students on the SACY committee, including at least three from each grade," Ms. Muston recalls. We wanted a small group, so we could all squeeze in my office, take in food shows and do other things that a larger group couldn't.

"We held our meetings after school. I explained the entire operation to the students—expenses, recordkeeping, USDA nutritional requirements, menu structuring, and reimbursement procedures. I went over everything from food purchasing through preparation," says Ms. Muston.

"I explained that our lunch program is self-sufficient—we get no financial help from the school," she continues, "and when the students saw exactly what they had to work with, they really knuckled down.

"Once they knew the rules, they started designing their own Type A menus. And if a student wanted to map out a menu alone, we'd display it on the menu board outside the cafeteria with his name beside it."

Setting up the salad bar

"When we began some of these things, we didn't know we were being innovative. We just did it because the students wanted it. Girls were especially interested in a salad bar. Many have told me it helps them keep their weight down.

"I have to admit, I was leery about the salad bar at first. For one thing, I thought maybe the croutons would be tossed all over the cafeteria. When I first came here, I wasn't allowed to serve cherry tomatoes, fresh fruit, or other small foods—nothing that could be used as missiles. But that problem hasn't developed.

"My next worry was that it wouldn't pay for itself. I'd see boys heap salad on 'til it overflowed onto their trays," Ms. Muston says. "But when I figured costs," she adds, "we were within the budget."

"Students are practical," the food service director continues. "At first, they wanted the salad bar away from the regular serving area, in the dining hall. But I explained the cost of new equipment and space requirements, and they understood why we had to leave it in the serving area. We had to buy more salad bowls. That's all. We had four salad bars when we started, serving 500 salads a day. Now, we're down to two, serving 200 a day, out of 1,600 high school enrollment. And, I also thought the students would take too long to serve themselves, but they're really quick."

Tote bags speed serving line

"Another idea that grew out of student complaints was a tote bag ser-



A Jeff student helps himself to salad.

vice,” Ms. Muston says. “Many students were involved in athletics and had lunchtime meetings. They were in a hurry! They wanted a fast way of getting served, eating, and getting out. Since no food is allowed outside the cafeteria, we borrowed the tote bag idea from another school system.

“We use standard white lunch bags—number six bags—and we print the school team names on them to jazz them up. Printing costs are minimal, and we order 50,000 a semester. When we first did this, students were excited about having the team name displayed on the bags, but one cost conscious mother called to ask what the printing had to do with good nutrition. “Nothing,” I said, “except that students are proud of it and eat more of their lunches.

“The students wanted to know what we could put in the bag,” says Ms. Muston. “We built some Type A’s around hot sandwiches. Our main concern was keeping the sandwiches and french fries hot. Now we use a warming cabinet at the serving line, and we serve barbecues, cheeseburgers, and chili dogs—piping hot right up to the time they’re placed in front of the students on the serving line. They’re stacked on trays, and when one trayful runs out, a server puts out another.

“We set up separate lines on tables for the tote bags, and the only reason a student would have to go in the regular serving area would be for a milkshake if he didn’t want milk. The cashier is right at the table. It works the same way at the junior highs. Foods that don’t need heating, such as raisin cups, or fresh fruit, are placed next to the tote bags for students to pick up separately.

“Tote bags became popular slowly. Now, they’re our most popular lunch format. We serve 600 of them at Jeff, compared to 200 salads and 300-plus traditional plate lunches. All are Type A. Our vocational students take tote bags with them to eat when they’re away, and our school teams use them when they play away from home. Tote bags doubled the average daily participation in our three junior highs,” Ms. Muston points out.

Milkshakes popular

“SACY students liked the idea of installing milkshake machines. Right off when I told them the cost I also told them that we couldn’t afford to pay someone to draw the shakes—we’d have to run it on the honor system, with the students serving themselves. Although I occasionally see a student fill his container more than once before paying, that doesn’t happen very often. The student newspaper did a good job in promoting the honor system.”

Student taste-testers

“SACY students play an important part in helping us choose the foods we serve,” says Ms. Muston. “When I’m deciding on a new food, I get several different brands and have the SACY committee taste them.

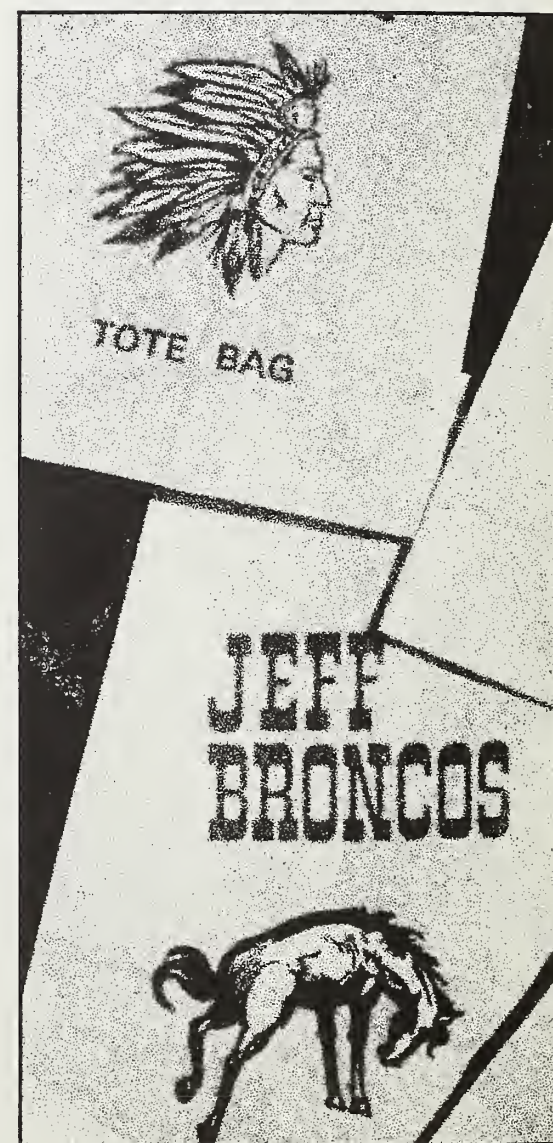
“We run it much like a regular taste-test panel. If we have six items to test, we rate them one to six. Students never know which branch is which. The committee has to tell me which they liked best, and why.

“Students consider flavor, color, texture, aroma, appearance, and note their findings on a form. About 18 or 19 students participate at a time. The food item that gets the most votes wins.

“I try it less formally at our elementary schools, too. We often ask the students how they like something we’re serving. And sometimes we’ll ask a few of the youngsters to taste a new dish.”

Students rate own menus

“Besides tasting new foods, SACY students evaluate the meals they plan,” continued Ms. Muston. “I ask them to make their evaluations according to the acceptability of food to them as well as to other students. They note the number of Type A’s served as opposed to a la carte lunches—we also run a small a la carte line—and they keep charts on each menu, so they can tell which meals are most popular.



"We don't use cycle menus. We never want a student to reach a point where he expects peaches whenever we serve whole kernel corn. We try to work a month ahead on our menus. Students have to consider our use of USDA-donated foods and our lack of storage space—we have daily food delivery.

"We serve almost every vegetable at Jeff," said the food service director. "Whole kernel corn, peas, and mixed vegetables are most popular. Broccoli and spinach are two of the least popular. Rice is another food that's not very popular."

"Even during summer vacation, I get about 12 SACY members to visit food shows with me," said Ms. Muston. "They get to taste foods there, also, and sometimes buy products from the tradesmen."

Lunch makes the news

"We use the school newspaper—*The Jeff Booster*, the school's public address system, the school grapevine, and local newspapers to let people know what's going on at Jefferson High. I think when you get the community behind you, you're better off," says Ms. Muston.

"The first newspaper reporter to do a story, 'Jeff Students to Plan School Lunch', was herself a Jeff graduate. The salad bar was launched amid editorials, calling the idea a 'trend setter', and news articles describing how it got started. *The Jeff Booster* editorialized 'Lunch-time has now become something to look forward to and enjoy.' And that makes me the proudest," beamed Ms. Muston. "The arrival of tote bags drew a news story quoting me as saying a devious 'plot' was afoot at Jeff 'to get the students to eat better.'

" 'Students' Lunches Applauded', began one news article, and 'SACY Serves Students Salads, Shakes; Add Burger Grill to Cafeteria Curriculum' read still another."

Participation increases

"When I came here, we were selling about 600 Type A meals on a good day. Now, when we get around 1,000, I start wondering where we're slipping! Our average is 1,100, or about 62½ percent of average daily attendance.

"We run a semi-scramble system here," reported Ms. Muston. "In other words, we don't serve students at one central serving line. The only place students are regimented is at the cash register. The lunchroom is calm—the kids eat and leave very little trash behind.

"When we first started our SACY group in September 1975, we met every 2 weeks. Then we leveled off at once a month. All of our changes have been worked out in less than 2 years, and the SACY group wasn't particularly active this last year. We just kept in touch, ready to respond to any problem.

"Except for the salad bowls, the changes didn't require buying equipment. By shifting tables into informal groupings for two, four and six people, and by mixing our few round ones in, we've given the students a little seating variety.

"When the Jeff Broncos are playing at home, the cooks come in and prepare sandwiches and other dishes so both the players and student spectators can get something to eat. In fact, we've got our trophy cases in the cafeteria. It's clean and bright, and music plays at lunchtime," Ms. Muston says.

Interest continues

"Since we started the SACY group, two graduates have gone into food service. We have some students who work in our kitchen as part of their vocational training and rotate at different jobs.

"I really feel there's a need for this kind of training, Ms. Muston emphasizes. "I give an award each year to the student who is the most helpful in our liaison work with the student body. I like it when students can stand back and say 'Gee! I started that!'—and they like it too.

"We're now reaching into the junior high schools with the student organization. The more we talk about food, the more we'll get into the nutritional aspects of it, and eventually students will get more nutrition education without even being aware of it. We should be working more with the elementary students," she adds. "Then they'll automatically make the right choices as they grow older."

"I've learned that school kids can really tell it like it is." Ms. Muston concludes, "If you seek their advice, they'll let you have it." □

by Russell T. Forte

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